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# ART FRONT



Siqueiros

10 THE AMERICAN ARTISTS' CONGRESS BY CHARMION VON WIEGAND • BROOK AND HIS TRADITION BY JACOB KAINEN • THE FRICK FORMULA BY CLARENCE WEINSTOCK • LOUIS BUNIN ON YOSL CUTLER • THE UNION SHOW • PAINTINGS BY HARRITON • HULLEY • MARK • TSCHACBASOV



# NATIONAL ORGANIZATION

## A Letter from the West

*To meet the general call for information about the New York Artists' Union, the ART FRONT has established this department as a permanent feature of the magazine. It will be under the auspices of the National Correspondence Committee of the New York Artists' Union. It will contain information given in answer to the numerous questions asked about the organizational problems of organizing artists' groups on an economic basis, the artistic standards of the new organizations and particular local problems of each group. It will also feature articles and correspondence from artists, artists' organizations and affiliated groups throughout the country.*

**T**HOUGH occasional rumors have found their way here to Los Angeles testifying to the existence of an Artists' Union in New York City, not until I had the good fortune to receive some issues of the ART FRONT did I fully realize it as a fact! Your publication, with all that it represents, was not only stimulating; it was little short of amazing. It was an indication that artists can work together! Experience on the west coast had led me to believe otherwise.

I have been active in several attempts to organize artists in Southern California. First in a small group in the early part of '32. Later, with a group stimulated by the visit and work of Siqueiros. And still later when the P.W.A.P. favored some 150 local artists with anything from a two-week job to an all too brief five months' employment. Every effort to interest artists in uniting their forces for a single purpose, whether in the revolutionary manner or merely in the formation of a Society of Independents for the purpose of holding non-jury shows, was either extremely short-lived or failed completely.

Through these repeatedly disheartening experiences I was beginning to agree with Plekhanov who wrote in "Art and Social Life"—"Among the bourgeois

ideologists going over to the side of the proletariat we see very few artists. This is probably due to the fact that the height of theoretical understanding of the whole course of the historical movement can be reached only by those who think, whereas the contemporary artists, in contradiction to the great masters of the Renaissance, for instance, think exceedingly little."

It is not reasonable to suppose that there is a higher level of intelligence among artists in New York than in Los Angeles. There are artists here who are honest, sincere, capable, and who are struggling against hopeless economic fetters to produce good art. If they jealously guard their individuality, argue in behalf of pure art, disdain the thought that social problems are a concern of the artist, seek isolation from all outside influence, and scorn the inclusion of "propaganda" in the fine arts, they are at least united in a scepticism as to the possibility of artists working together for any purpose, or at least, for any good.

It seems to me that an understanding of, and an attempt to overcome, this lethargy on the part of the western artist, is a matter of no small importance. If the artist in Los Angeles enjoyed freedom from persecution and oppression as an artist, then there would naturally be little reason to argue with him to better his situation. But Los Angeles has demonstrated that it is going to pull the artist down to the level of American Legion and Chamber of Commerce standards. To do this it has tolerated the destruction of three murals, each on semi-public property, and a dozen or more portable frescos done by the Siqueiros-formed "Bloc of Painters," now extinct.

To the average artist the mutilation of the latter work, which dealt with Negro persecution in the United States, may be quite justified. Those who comment on social conditions should expect raids by the red squad! And, by the same token, the whitewashing of the subversive content in the Siqueiros fresco might be approved, since it disturbed the quaint

Mexican atmosphere of Olvera Street. For the sake of the tourist trade even the fine craftsmanship of a man of Si-  
(Continued on page 14)

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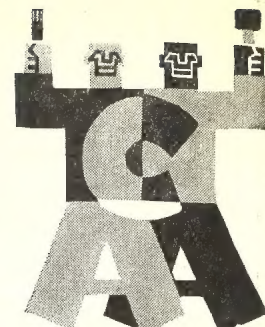
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# ART FRONT

FEBRUARY, 1936



## FOR A PERMANENT ART PROJECT

THE newspapers in the last few months have looked like time-table recordings of the scurrings back and forth of various relief officials between Washington and New York, with a prize plum awaiting at the other side as reward. Ridder goes to Washington and comes proudly back, waving in air a few millions to take W.P.A. through April. Hopkins takes a trip, and slices seven millions off white-collar appropriations. Ridder takes a ride again and brings home the bacon to last through June. From all sides come rumors. On all sides is fear. Roosevelt says no one will starve, but in his over-staged address to Congress he assures "entrenched greed" that "we can anticipate a reduction in our appropriations for relief." Lehman tells the legislature that "unemployment relief is our most serious problem." What to do about it? The Governor says—investigate! While Ridder takes train rides, and Hopkins cuts white-collar allotments; while Roosevelt campaigns and Lehman investigates—what are we, artists on W.P.A., to do? We are not interested in this lottery, in this juggling with dollars as against human needs and wants. We are interested in preserving ourselves as artists who want to work as artists and live like human beings.

We recognize that in these work relief projects for artists there has been set up for the first time in this country a state subsidy of art. A subsidy fraught with uncertainty, shifting, never giving real security. A subsidy which did not take into consideration the working and living quarters of the artist, his materials, his tools. But no matter how insecure, no matter how unsatisfactory, still for hundreds of talented and skilled craftsmen a chance to work at their craft, to produce creatively, to return to the State valuable cultural services. The government responsibility toward its artists must be maintained. We have often in

the pages of ART FRONT analyzed the reasons for the end of private art patronage as it had existed in other days. We have made clear that those days cannot return. The Artists' Union in its very first days of struggle recognized the downfall of the private patron and called for the setting up of government projects and the emergence of the State as the art patron. Now more than ever is private patronage dead; and now more than ever must we fight to extend and maintain government responsibility. Political speeches and train-rides are not the answer to our problem. What we want is a permanent Federal Art Project.

## CONGRESS AGAINST WAR AND FASCISM

THE recent Congress against War and Fascism, held in Cleveland on January 4, 5, and 6, represented a great advance over the Congress held a year ago, not in the number of delegates alone, but in the broadness of its representation. Trade unionists, professionals, farmers, clergymen of various denominations, liberals, participated to a much wider extent than ever before. International representations from Cuba, Mexico, Canada and Porto Rico, and the Chinese and Japanese guests, effectively linked up this Congress with the world-wide movement against war and fascism. A growing participation of Negro delegates was an outstanding feature. All in all, a new and higher stage of a growing national movement against reactionary forces was evident, and it helped to make the American League against War and Fascism, the sponsoring organization, a stronger bulwark against war and reaction.

Artists' groups all over the country supported this movement and ten artists' delegates were present at the Congress. Artists as a rule representing the most progressive forces in society, today, are among the first to feel the brunt of a

fascist attack. The censorship of art, the destruction of murals, and the repression of the artist's freedom are among the first signs. The example of the dearth of opportunity for the practice of free art in the fascist countries of Europe, the cutting off of the artist's economic, cultural and democratic rights today threaten all artists. It is for this reason and because of our desire that it might not happen here, that the Artists' Union will respond to any invitation to join together in securing the guarantee of our constitutional rights and democratic liberties.

## JULY 1st, 1936

JULY 1st is a very ominous date for the artists on the Art Project, for it is on that date that the Art Project is officially terminated. Some artists may feel confident, because of simple faith, that the Art Project will somehow continue. The political speeches of President Roosevelt and the rumblings that come out of Washington should dispel such illusions. There are definite tendencies expressed in the President's address to Congress that show that there will be concrete concessions to the Liberty Leaguers in the form of cutting off of Federal relief and subsidies, to insure no further increase in taxes. That is the administration's role for the year 1936, but what will be the role of the artists? The effective force of artists' organizations, protests and demands depends upon the artists now on the Art Project.

The Artists' Union feels that it has every right to remind the newcomers on the Project, both on work-relief and non-relief basis, that it was the Artists' Union that was responsible for the increased appropriation for art projects, the rescinding of the wage-cut and the comparatively favorable conditions on the jobs. It was the Artists' Union's fight against the pauper's oath that was responsible for the 25 per cent non-relief





**NO MORE WAR**

**JAMES HULLEY**

*From the Union Show—Courtesy A.C.A. Gallery*

quota which permitted many artists to be put to work, who heretofore were unable to qualify for relief. The fight of the Union was for the benefit of all artists and, in the coming struggle to maintain and increase the art program of the W.P.A., it calls for all artists to join the Artists' Union and participate in its efforts to secure further appropriations.

The past year has shown the beneficial result of militant and mass actions of artists' organizations, and artists must see to it that these organizations are strengthened. Join the Artists' Union to protect your job and pay-check!

#### **"OUR" MUNICIPAL ART GALLERY AND CENTER**

**T**HE first Municipal Art Gallery and Center opened on January 6, 1936. The Artists' Union has fought hard and long for this gallery. The Mayor's attempt to use it now, politically, hardly

adds to its prestige. In the gallery's application blank, now rescinded, there were inserted two requirements that were not compatible with the interests of artists. The first was the "alien" clause that prevented all but citizens from exhibiting. The other was the hospitality clause that would forbid the showing of pictures which might offend the administration. The first so-called aliens to feel the sting of the clause worthy of Mr. William Randolph Hearst were Yasuo Kuniyoshi, I. Tomatzu and A. Nagai. Their Japanese birth precludes formal citizenship and, therefore, their right to exhibit in the Municipal Gallery. Long identified with art in this country, and recognized as American painters, the works of these men are being shown in many American museums of art.

The Artists' Union had the peculiar notion that public buildings, paid for by taxes and included in the sales prices of purchases by residents, are for the ser-

vice and benefit of all residents and taxpayers. They felt that, like the city streets, city hospitals, schools and parks of this city, a municipal gallery should be open to all residents and that it should include the freedom of expression inherent in our constitutional rights. They conveyed this notion in a forceful telegram to the Mayor and to Mrs. Breckinridge, Chairman of the Mayor's hand-picked Committee of 100. A delegation, unable to secure an appointment before the opening day, went up, nevertheless, to see the Committee responsible for this ruling. At a membership meeting, the Union voted to boycott the show. Meanwhile two groups of Artists' Union members scheduled to exhibit in the opening show of the gallery, sent telegrams of instructions to withhold the exhibition of their works until the two clauses were eliminated. The next day, two delegations were asked to come and see Mrs. Breckinridge and were told that the demands were acceded to and that the two objectionable clauses were to be eliminated.

Prominent in the victorious fight was the Artists' Committee against Discrimination, a group of sixty-five well-known exhibitors, that spontaneously formed a committee to protest the "alien" clause. They issued an open letter of protest to the press, calling all artists to join in a refusal to show pictures until these clauses were rescinded. Included in the provisional committee of this group were such artists as Bernard Karfiol, Alexander Brook, Niles Spencer, Maurice Becker, Fred Knight, Raphael Soyer, Arnold Blanch, Yasuo Kuniyoshi, George Picken, Harry Gottlieb, Louis Bouche and Stuart Davis. Their stand was also supported by Eugene Speicher, Max Weber, Leon Kroll, John Sloan and others.

These issues raise the fundamental question as to who was responsible for these rulings. Mrs. Breckinridge, in a public statement, blames the artists on the committee. The artists appointed on this committee by the Mayor in turn disavow responsibility, claiming that the only meeting called to discuss the gallery was held for an hour about seven weeks ago, where the question of the application blank was not even presented. It is sufficient to say that every artist on the Committee of 100, when made aware of the ruling and protests, promised support to the artists' demands. The Artists' Union, too, wishes to protest Mrs. Breckinridge's statement. The only way to have artists' responsibility on the Committee of 100 is to have proper representation on this committee by regularly elected delegates of bona-fide artists'



organizations. It is in this way that the artists who were responsible for the whole plan of the Municipal Art Gallery will also be responsible for its administration and making it truly our Municipal Art Gallery and Center.

## GREETINGS TO THE ARTISTS CONGRESS

ON this occasion of the first gathering of forces of the American Artists' Congress, the Artists' Union extends warmest fraternal greetings. We pledge to support the program of the Congress with the full weight of our organization.

This Congress has the deepest contemporary significance. When artists of recognized standing travel from all parts of the nation and beyond, enduring hardships to take part in the proceedings, even the most obdurate must acknowledge the vital

character of the program which has brought them together. We of the Union, in our own way, have carried on the same battles against the same reactionary forces which it is the purpose of the Congress to combat. Of course, the Congress must take the initiative in the defense of civil liberties, for freedom of expression in art, and against any manifestations of fascist tendencies. The Congress must do everything possible to forestall war, and should be in the van of this movement. The united impact of the Congress members, representing as they do the most important artists in the country, will be a tremendous factor in mobilizing public sentiment against the instigators of war and reaction.

The Union feels that it too has done important work in this regard and will continue to do so in the future. The decisive actions we have initiated for the

daily needs of the artists; for jobs, security, municipal art centers, freedom of artistic expression and for unity with labor have shown the value of organization to the artists.

The Congress is testimony to a new historical development. The critical situation in which contemporary civilization finds itself has forced hitherto submerged strata of the population (politically speaking, of course) to come to the surface of social life and to participate in shaping its destiny. Artists, because they are observers and interpreters of life, are eminently qualified to pass judgment on social forms and manifestations. The fact that this highly qualified body has finally become socially articulate augurs well for the future.

It is in this light that we greet the Artists' Congress and wish it a long life.

## SELF-GOVERNMENT AND THE MUNICIPAL ART CENTER

ART FRONT is happy to include the following two comments by prominent artists on a subject which we have pursued with some interest ourselves, namely the establishment of a Municipal Art Center and the manner of its administration. We let them speak:

Says Harry Gottlieb:

"Artists should be grateful to the Municipal Art Committee and its chairman, Mrs. Breckinridge, for a lesson in diplomacy and tactics. They have also learned where their interests lie and on whom they depend.

"The Municipal Art Center was the scene of maneuvers. This gallery which the artists had fondly thought to be created for the exposition of their work, irrespective of conditions, was found to be closed to two important groups of creators, namely those who did not happen to be citizens and those who were believed to 'abuse the hospitality of the administration of New York.' These 'rules' for which no member of a committee is willing to assume responsibility, were proclaimed shortly before the grand opening of the gallery. No better way of closing the place could have been found.

"Friends of Yasuo Kuniyoshi, first to be affected by the former of the rulings, immediately organized an Artists' Provisional Committee against Discrimination. The Artists' Union cleared its decks for action. The delegations of both groups vied with each other for first appearance at the offices of the Municipal Committee. Half the artists invited to exhibit threatened to remove their

paintings and sculpture. Among these are 'The Ten' whose show is reviewed in this issue of ART FRONT. All of these are Union members, as are several of the sculptors.

"Mrs. Breckinridge, with large piles of telegrams on her desk, called a meeting of her committee. As the gallery couldn't very well open half empty and embraced by a picket line, the problem was now to pretend that a defeat was a concession. The committee filed before the artists in heavy array. The artists did not budge. Next morning the papers reported that the committee had 'decided' to revoke its alien clause and to allow its hospitality to be abused.

"What have the artists learned from this? That, since they have originated the idea and fought for the establishment of a Municipal Art Center, they cannot allow it to fall into the hands of a confused, hotsy-totsy committee officially delegated to understand art. They will tolerate no secret agreements to 'guide' or 'restrain them from themselves.' They are going to demand democratic representation of all artists' groups on the Committee of 100. All artists' organizations should join in this demand and on any other issues which threaten their freedom of expression or any other of their basic rights as artists and as human beings of any country, race or belief."

Hugo Gellert makes the following comments:

"When Mayor LaGuardia announced his Christmas present through the newspapers, the New York artists said, 'Thanks, Mr. Mayor, but that snuff box

is not small enough.'

"It's not a snuff box, it's the Municipal Art Center,' said the Mayor.

"Oh, for the Municipal Art Center, it is small enough."

"Even before the doors of the Municipal Art Center could be opened, a scandalous incident stirred the artists to revolt against its administration.

"Yasuo Kuniyoshi, who spent nearly thirty years of his productive life in New York and happens to be one of the major contributors to the artistic achievements of this city, was pronounced ineligible to exhibit his works in the Municipal Art Center. Kuniyoshi is not a citizen and that counts him out. To top this grotesque situation, he could not become a citizen, even if he wanted to; no Japanese may have that privilege in our land of democracy.

"But that is not all. Another clause on the entry blanks stipulated that any art work, containing subject matter that may be construed as criticism leveled at the administration, was taboo in the Municipal Art Center.

"The irony of it is that the original plans for the Municipal Art Center were designed by New York artists precisely to avoid such shameless violations of the rights of the artists; as the above.

"Outlines and details of the plans were presented to Mayor LaGuardia by the Artists' Committee of Action on March 20, May 9 and August 30, 1934, as recorded in the first issue of ART FRONT.

"The plans specified Self-Government, as an absolutely essential feature of the Municipal Art Center, as follows:



"1. Only artists to hold executive offices."

"2. All executives to be duly elected by the artists themselves."

"The success of that institution depends on these provisions."

"When on January 6, 1935, Mayor LaGuardia announced the plans for the Municipal Art Center, not a word was said about its originators, the hundreds of New York artists, who spent months and months in planning it and creating popularity for it. The Mayor represented it, to his handpicked Committee of 100, as his own creation, that, like Minerva, jumped out of the head of the Mayor. Not only were the artists completely ignored, but they were actually kept away from that meeting at City Hall by a full array of 'New York's Finest.'

"Thus was Self-Government, the major requisite for the successful functioning of the Municipal Art Center, honored by the Mayor. But his failure to respect that requisite revenged itself even before the doors of the Art Center could be opened!

"Exhibiting artists notified the Mayor's representative, Mrs. Breckinridge, Chair-

man of the Municipal Art Committee of 100, that unless the discriminatory rules against foreign-born artists were revoked and unless the attempts of censorship were abolished, the artists would boycott and picket the opening of the Municipal Art Center, where the Mayor was to officiate!

"The swift united action of the artists had its results. A couple of days before the opening, Mrs. Breckinridge made the following announcement:

"1. Any artist who has been a resident of New York State for one year and of the city for six months, will be eligible to exhibit his work in the temporary galleries of the Municipal Art Committee (Sic!).' This about the Kuniyoshi incident.

"2. It was decided also that the exhibitors have freedom in the choice of their own works for exhibition.' And this about censorship.

"A victory, if there ever was one! The artists have a voice in administering the Municipal Art Center, despite the Mayor!

"Now is the time to extend this temporary Municipal Art Center by demanding another building, as its annex, where

a Circulation Library could be maintained for the rental of art works, paintings, sculptors, etc., to institutions and private individuals, at a rental payable to the artists. As was specified in the original plans of the Artists' Committee of Action and proposed in the Federal Art Bill of the Artists' Union and published in ART FRONT in January, 1935.

"This move should be the first step in an energetic campaign of agitation for the permanent Municipal Art Gallery and Center, administered by the artists. The Art Center should be adequate, in character and scope, to house:

"1. Exhibitions by the artists of New York City.

"2. Free schools of painting, sculpture and graphic arts.

"3. Circulating library for rental of art works.

"4. A forum for discussion and popularization of art.

"The temporary New York Municipal Art Center is an achievement. The artists of New York made a good beginning. Let it be an incentive to all artists throughout the land. Build Municipal Art Centers in every city in the U.S.A.!"

## BROOK AND HIS TRADITION

by Jacob Kainen

ALEXANDER BROOK is not a figure to provoke controversy. In these days when anxious soul-searchings and revaluations plague contemporary painters; when verbal wars rage in American art over social attitudes and plastic methods, Alexander Brook continues in his familiar manner and elicits the same absent-minded admiration from all and sundry. Benton is damned or deified; Curry and Wood are ballyhooed or sneered at; Weber, Marin, Blume, Jones and the rest provoke varying responses and estimates. No one seems to feel it necessary to discuss Brook; he is just a good painter. What dull observer has failed to notice his "paint quality"? Who is not delighted by his whimsy? Who so hard-boiled as to resist the charm of his models?

Brook's influence is considerable among a younger set of New York painters; among art students it is nothing short of rampant. The current offering of Brook's work at the Downtown

Gallery explains his popularity. At the same time it reveals the limitations of the tradition of studio realism.

Followers of Brook's work will notice nothing particularly different in this exhibition of over forty recent paintings. Technical mastery has increased; there are a few more outdoor pictures than usual, but in the main it is the same Brook of the cool and refined greys, the full-bodied pigmentation—and the deadening atmosphere of the studio.

Why is Brook's work so lacking in contemporary meaning? Why is he so unprovocative? We shall begin by quoting Brook on Brook. In an article in *Creative Art* of October, 1929, entitled, "Alexander Brook—Painter," he makes some exceptionally revealing remarks, but not about painting. He fails to bring forth a single idea on art; he makes no mention of his painting problems, plastic or social—with one exception. That exception runs through the entire article like a guiding thread. The following

quotations will make my meaning clear:

"A painting, when hung, should become an integral part of the room, and in order for it to be so, it is quite important that the room be fully, and, if possible, glitteringly furnished."

"A good picture does not need outside help to make it better, but . . . the dignity of a fine mantel will often complement it very agreeably. After all, pictures should look best in the home, for that is the destination one hopes they will eventually reach."

Throughout the article he continues to repeat that he paints pictures to decorate the well-furnished American home. Although these are the utterances of 1929, his succeeding pictures do not indicate any change of viewpoint. This marked social attitude plays a great part in determining his esthetic attitude. The middle-class American home requires pictures which are pleasant, romantic, and not too socially real nor artistically complex. Brook is dominated by his market;



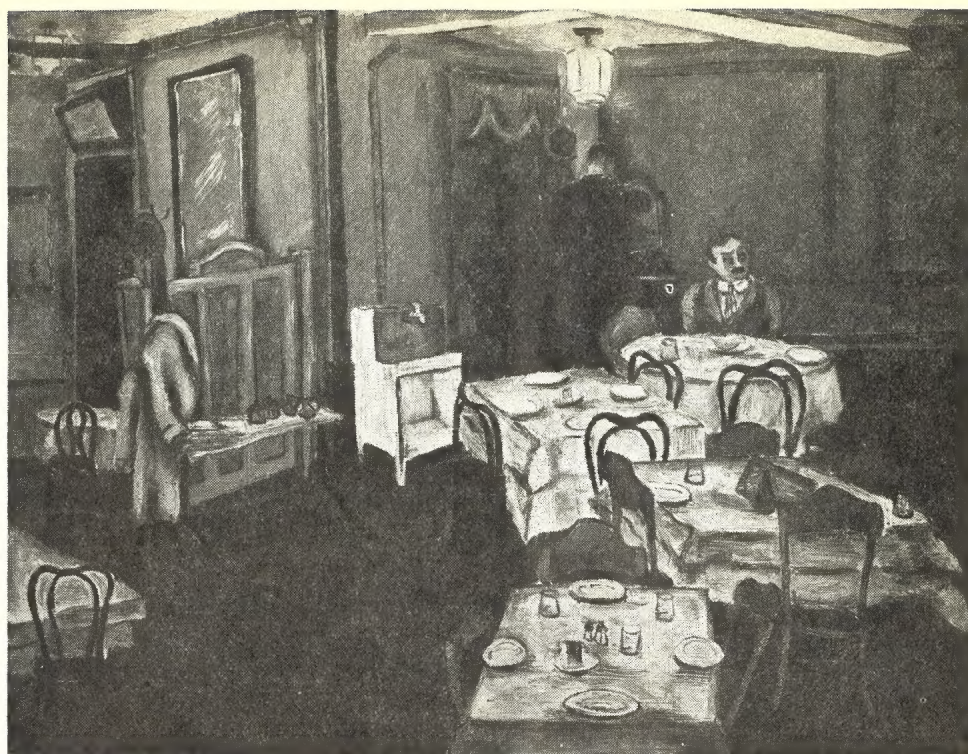
he cannot forget that he is producing commodities which must satisfy certain middle-class requirements. However, more than one painter finds himself making these concessions. How does Brook differ from them?

Brook's specific features arise from the fact that he is the culmination of the tradition of studio realism. The socially vital impulses of his masters, Corot and Degas, are lacking—only the molds remain. When Corot painted a figure piece, the model performed some function, such as sewing, reading or the like; when Degas worked from a model, she was bathing, dressing, dancing, pressing clothes or carrying on some simple duties. Corot in his day helped to break the back of the classic tradition of David and Ingres and the literary-romantic tendency of Delacroix. He contributed in his figure pieces of fresh plastic method and romantic realism to a young industrial capitalism. Degas' figure pieces caught the model in some phase of arrested action. For his time this approach was strictly contemporary and in keeping with the advent of the instantaneous photograph. Degas and Corot were sensitive to new social values.

Brook, however, makes the model and the studio self-conscious and self-sufficient. His models are not women performing socially meaningful functions, but models posing in a studio. His still-life paintings are studio objects more or less pleasingly arranged. "A Number of Things," for instance, is concocted of books, a ball of twine, a mahlstick, corrugated cardboard, a leafy sprig, New Year's bells, etc. There is no functional relationship which would transcend a studio set-up.

It is not difficult to see why Brook limits himself to his studio as the raw material for his art. He wants pleasing pictures, and what is more pleasant than the atmosphere of an artist's studio? It is a romantic little world, where charming denizens move about, detached from the oppressive reality of the city. The subject itself is already artistic. That is half the battle.

**R**ECOGNIZING the limitations of an art which restricts itself to studio exercises, Brook has carried a touch of whimsy throughout his work. An early picture, "The Intruder," features a mouse rummaging amidst a still-life. In the current exhibition, pictures like "Summer Gossip," two young ladies languishing in a bedroom, obviously chatting about their boy-friends; "Very Sad Lady," a model



RESTAURANT

BENDOR MARK

*From the Union Show—Courtesy A.C.A. Gallery*

posing in scanties, and a few other pictures, carry through a vulgar and sentimental story-telling.

The landscapes do not escape the infection of the studio. The harmonies are products of indoor conditioning; the trees, grass and skies are painted in the manner of studio objects. The new qualities implicit in external nature, air, light and organic movement are missing. A notable exception is the "Approach to Mt. Kisco." For once the subject is not pleasing in itself. It is an auto graveyard where discarded and rusty cars glow in a field of green. Brook's vision takes on the character of his subject matter and he produces a brilliant and interesting canvas, despite its weak design.

It was natural that Brook's greys became pastier and more attenuated the longer he permitted his art to inbreed. Some of his color-tones are too sickly even for the pallid girls who pose for him.

The almost exclusive absorption with women and children is in keeping with Brook's consistent desire to be charming. In more than forty pictures only two diminutive male heads appear.

Now it becomes obvious why Brook is so popular with art students. Also, why he creates no controversy. Students envy the mastery with which he paints objects.

They, too, paint models and still-life and love the glamour of the studio. Fundamentally, Brook's approach does not differ. The path he follows has been so well cleared by his predecessors; the problems he encounters have been so thoroughly solved that his familiar manner provokes no one. Every contemporary problem is side-stepped; every conviction is left outside the door of the studio.

Several New York painters who are of the same general tradition, notably Raphael Soyer, Ribak and Sikovsky, have carried studio realism out to social reality. For this they deserve praise, but let them beware of harmonies and mannerisms developed indoors. The muted greys and browns of an indoor model cannot catch the throb of contemporary life.

The fact that Brook is mired in the studio tradition is not the only reason for his present negative qualities. Coupled with this is the tremendous complexity of modern life, the significance of which makes Brook's art trivial. The rush of vast social forces toward war and civil war, toward death and birth, catapults the artist out of the idyllic world of the studio. A contemporary artist must enlarge his social experience and develop plastic methods which are suited to his needs. Failure to do so will result in artistic death.



# AMERICAN ARTISTS' CONGRESS

by Charmion von Wiegand

**P**REPARATIONS for the American Artists' Congress, which will open at Town Hall on Friday evening, February 14, are moving forward rapidly. The arrangements' committee has received many new signatures to the Call for the Congress, which emphasizes the need to safeguard culture and art against the threats of war and fascism.

So far, nearly 300 delegates have been accepted for the Congress. These are artists of widely separated aesthetic aims and achievements, academicians as well as outstanding figures of various modernist and abstractionist schools.

The inaugurating session at Town Hall will be open to the general public. For the closed sessions, at which the artists will deliberate, guest cards will be issued to art critics, writers on art, delegates from various artistic organizations, art students and others.

This is the first time in American history that artists have organized on so wide a scale for the purpose of protecting their crafts, and culture in general, in a social situation fraught with danger. The Congress plans to form a permanent cultural organization for painters, sculptors, and graphic artists.

The purposes of this new organization are indicated in the Congress Call which appealed to all artists who are "conscious of the need for action; realize the necessity of collective discussion and planning, with the objective of the preservation and development of our cultural heritage." The artists who signed the Call thereby expressed their willingness to cooperate with all groups "engaged in the common struggle against War and Fascism."

The program for the Congress has been drawn up around this central idea. The public meeting at Town Hall will

be addressed by speakers who will relate the problems of their art to the present social situation. Among the artists who have been invited to address this meeting are Rockwell Kent, George Biddle, Paulanship, Peter Blume, Joe Jones, Aaron Douglas and the photographer Margaret Bourke-White. Others who have been asked to speak are Professor John Dewey, Lewis Mumford and Heywood Broun.

The closed sessions have been divided into four sections. The first of these occupying the morning of Saturday, February 15, will be organized around the theme of the artist in society. Dr. Meyer Schapiro will open the session with a paper on the social basis of art. He will be followed by Y. Kuniyoshi with a paper on the subject of race, nationality and art. Max Weber, who recently signed the Call following the discrimination against Kuniyoshi by the Municipal Art Gallery, has been invited to speak on the artist and his audience.

On Saturday afternoon, the second session will discuss the immediate problems of the American artist. Arnold Blanch will speak on tendencies in modern American art, tracing their development from 1913 to the present. He will be followed by Louis Ferstadt on the role of the government in art, and by Hugo Gellert on war, fascism and art.

The third session, opening on Sunday morning, will be devoted to the economic problems of the American artist. A paper on the artists' economic status will be read by Alexander Stavenitz. Various artists' organizations, old and new, will be analyzed by Henry Billings. The critic Ralph Pearson has been invited to speak on museums, dealers and critics, as has Katherine Schmidt, secretary of the Rental Policy Committee, on the

rental policy of the Society of Painters, Sculptors and Gravers.

The fourth and final session, which will take up Sunday afternoon, will be devoted entirely to the practical task of forming a permanent organization of American artists, which will adequately deal with the problems of the artists.

**A**T all the sessions, the prepared papers and reports will be followed by full discussion from the floor. It is expected that most of the delegates will participate in this discussion, and every facility is being arranged to give all shades of opinion and all regions of the United States a hearing. For this purpose Saturday evening has been set aside for various commissions to discuss the problems raised at the Congress in greater detail. Each commission will take up a special topic, and each delegate will be entitled to attend any of these commissions and to participate in their discussions. By this method, which will supplement the discussion from the floor at the regular sessions, it is hoped to obtain the widest possible expression of opinion by the American artists interested in the purposes of the Congress.

The various committees which are making the practical arrangements for the Congress will continue to meet until February 14, and minor changes in the program are therefore likely to be made. But the basic plan will stand as here outlined, and it supercedes any previous announcements of programs which may have been made.

All the artists engaged in the preparatory work, as well as the hundreds who have signed the Call, are enthusiastic about the forthcoming Congress. They feel that the convocation of a Congress such as this indicates that the most progressive artists are beginning to realize that their own integrity, their talents, their work, are jeopardized by that destruction of all culture which fascism of necessity bring in its train. Artists are now widely stirred by the conviction that only in the struggle against war and fascism can art and culture hope to survive and to move forward to new heights of development.

In Memoriam  
**EARLE  
RICHARDSON**



Country Auction  
Abraham Harriton

*From the Union Show  
—Courtesy of A.C.A.  
Galleries*

## THE UNION SHOW

By Charles Humbolet

**T**HE Artists' Union has exhibited for the first time in a public gallery in group form. The show at the 'A.C.A. gallery is the result of the choice of a jury elected by the membership at one of its general meetings. It is, thus, fair to assume that the paintings there reflect not only the creative tendencies but also definite critical approaches to art within the union as a whole.

Quite apart from any question of individual merit, the paintings seem to be divided very sharply in their ways of treating scenes and experiences in general, or even what might be said to be the same scene. Two waterfronts, two workers, two street views of approximately the same subject matter will be dealt with in such different manner that a visitor might say, "Is this the same world I am looking at in both these paintings?"

These sharp divisions may be reduced essentially to one. On the one hand are those who believe that they may best render the world as they see it by "good painting," that is by mastery of their craft in terms of certain traditions in painting. The tradition to which they attach themselves may be that of Rembrandt, Manet, Braque or any other master whatsoever. What matters is that these artists feel that objects and events are easier to handle with respect to their meaning, if they are linked beforehand to some mass of already achieved triumphs in the world of art. The way Rembrandt or Picasso paints a beggar may help them to understand an outcast today. Chief among these artists are Moses Soyer, Abraham Harriton, Louis Ribak, and Ishigaki, too, in a sense.

Opposed to these is an ever-growing body of artists who are prepared to forego momentarily many of their advantages as members of the society of acceptedly good painters. They are willing to take chances with their brushwork, their color, their space relations and their composition. They want to disregard some of

the elements which most artists feel indispensable to any work that deserves the name of painting. (This is not a defense of bad painters. One speaks only of those who could obey the laws they violate.) Among these men are Tschacbasov, Haupt, Abbey and Mark.

From seeing the Union show one is inclined to stake one's hopes on the latter group. The good painters seem often to have a technique unsuited to the things they intend to express. The picket lines are too finished, the houses of the poor a little too theatrical, the street scenes a little too orderly, the factory chimneys are gentle as poplar trees, the portraits are so settled—and Breugel would have painted differently had he lived in New England. One has no quarrel with mastery of craft, but only with the fact that this craft is used too abstractly, too much in and for itself regardless of the requirements of a particular subject. You can't paint a demonstration with the same brush strokes and the same color you use for a house on a hill. The point is that, even if these painters attained perfect control of their materials; if they could do everything that it is possible for a great painter to do in the way of craftsmanship, they would still not have solved the problems that face the painter today. Just as Giotto, if he were alive and painted like Giotto, would not meet that problem. And no matter how sensitive a

painter may be to moods, plays of light and shade, intimacies, atmospheres, his very sensitivity may itself become a sort of tradition within his own life, a tradition limiting his imagination and his ability to handle the coarser and more violent events that strike us daily.

The others are influenced too, but not in the same way. They are not pursuing one technique which will deal with all things one has seen, seen—or may see. Rather they are testing numbers of techniques to find out which ones are effective for one and which for another situation. To the spectator this may appear to be copying; for the artist himself it is really a probing and discovery. Anyway young men have the right to imitate everybody, but older ones should not imitate even themselves.

The English, French and Russian revolutions were all revolutions, but were the same tactics used in all of them? Likewise the American revolution in painting needs techniques different from those of any tradition or other revolution in painting. New times, new struggles, new hopes, new methods.

When clothes are not as picturesque as they used to be, when the still life apples are all rotting unsold on the ground, and when the interiors are removed by the sheriff, then artists open their doors wide. They go into the streets to see what's doing.





# THE FRICK FORMULA

by Clarence Weinstock

*"The exchange value of a palace can be expressed in a definite quantity of boxes of shoe polish and, conversely, London manufacturers expressed the value of many boxes of shoe polish with their palaces."*

*Marx—"Critique of Political Economy."*

**W**HENEVER a famous art collector is mentioned in the press, the critics develop a peculiar superstition. They become teleologists, believers in final causes. The patron takes on some of the attributes of God. He, not the painter, is credited with the pictures in his house. In fact, the critics go so far as to imply that the painter was really the immortal patron disguised in the base form of an artist.

Only such awe could account for the insensitivity to bare fact and bad atmosphere revealed in the praise given to Henry Clay Frick and his collection. Or are we to believe that the critics know less about Mr. Frick than any Pennsylvania miner? Or any art dealer for that matter?

On June 23, 1892, the steel mills of Carnegie Bros. Company, located in Homestead, Pennsylvania, declared a lockout of all their workers. The step had been well prepared by the owners. Andrew Carnegie and his handy man, Frick, were out to break the great union of men in the mills, the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers. In 1889 they had demanded its dissolution, coincident with wage cuts and wholesale layoffs. They were now ready to complete their plan.

First they built a barbed-wire fence three miles long and fifteen feet high around their property. So fortified, they announced they were planning to violate the union agreement, flout collective bargaining and force their employees to sign individual contracts whose terms would reduce them virtually to serfdom. When we consider that the Amalgamated Association represented to the workers their only bulwark against starvation, a society for the protection of exploited and enslaved men, we can understand how vile a provocation this was. It was followed by one yet viler. Frick, of whom it is said that, if he had been a Southern slave holder, he would have been the worst one, arranged for the Pinkerton Detective Agency to send three hundred "gorillas," armed to kill, to Homestead. They were to have 250 rifles and 300 pistols.

This scum came floating down the river one morning on a barge, and was met at the dock by half the population of the town of 12,000. The "deputies" were asked to go back where they came from. They answered by firing into the crowd of workers, killing ten and wounding many. They were then attacked and driven off by the almost unarmed populace.

Of course, this unexpected unruliness of the people required the attentions of the state militia, watchdog in capital's backyard. From July to November, when the union was forced to admit temporary defeat, Homestead became a concentration camp, a little New Germany. Horror touched the whole country at its name. One spoke of Carnegie and Frick

with the same loathing one now uses for Hitler, Goering and Goebbels. These two were asked by their workers for no more than roofs through which the rain did not pour, for food their stomachs could hold, for work that did not require their lives in less years than they could count on their fingers. For this, these two delivered their workers to troupes of drunkards, horses trained to kick and bite, to gangs of "rats" and "wolves," killers for the fun of it. When the men and women of Homestead emerged to face winter, it was no sudden season. A winter of the heart, a winter to their hopes, to everything that was good in their lives, had stiffened them already. Capital had achieved elemental terror.

Afterward, the Presbyterian conscience got to work—conveniently late. Andrew Carnegie went forth to redeem his soul with public libraries. Then the working people of hundreds of small American towns told him what they thought of him. They said, "Take your black money away from here; you can go to hell for all we care." And they built libraries and bought books with their own money, in spite of Carnegie.

Frick held out longer, with only one slip. In 1895, he bought fifteen pictures in Europe. One's name was "Sunday Evening in a Miner's Village." Away from the scene of the crime, Frick! Let others buy your pictures for you! Which they will do shortly.

Which brings us to a neat moral problem: If a man is not answerable for murders committed by thugs he has hired to increase his fortune, can he be credited with paintings procured by experts he pays to enlarge his reputation?

**B**UT let us look at that five-and-a-half million-dollar mansion and that post mortem gift of his. Here is a supreme symbol of modern society, of the capitalist idea of order. Every painting has certain value, represents labor, transactions of different shades, and can vouch for its owner's ability to pay. Every enamel, bronze, chair or Greek column, means so many gold pieces, stocks, Liberty Bonds, War Savings Stamps, fractions of battleships, flares of liquid fire. The breath of the organ that plays at noon is full of cash.

Thus an acute sense of the appropriate pervades the collection. All the rules of imitation are followed. The periods of heaviest and of falsest furniture are here, like molasses and gingerbread. These provide both key and common denominator to the show. You may think that Frick gathered his paintings in sympathetic understanding, and not out of envy



of Wallace in England and Morgan here. Look twice at the junk shop which straggles through the salons and fills the corners of the smaller cabinets.

The arrangement of the place is typical. So much ground is given to the untouchable bric-a-brac that one gets cock-eyed looking at the pictures. The most expensive paintings are roped off from the audience. The room where they hang looks like a football field, on which El Greco and Holbein are in position to crash through the Titian-Bellini line.

Do not think that you will find nothing there to repay you for going. El Greco, Titian, Bellini, Holbein, Velasquez, Rembrandt, Hals and Goya cannot be spoiled even by the vulgarest protector. But it seems less important to discuss their qualities than to protest the wrong done them.

The work of these men was not bought out of love for some particular expression of the human spirit or even out of interest in certain technical achievements in the history of art. It was bought to satisfy an imperialist's idea of the Renaissance and of his affinity to it. Hypocrisy is the essence of that idea. The profiteer

wants to see himself as a fine gentleman, with hands like limp hares, with elegant shirts and hanging royal lips. He wants to sit with Boucher and Fragonard ladies whose dresses are just low and whose petticoats are just high enough. With St. Jerome in the next room to keep watch.

The capitalist idea of order—the employer “had nothing to do” with the dead strikers; the collector has nothing to do with his paintings; Frick having died in 1919, the “gift” comes from a seventeen-year old ghost; the furniture grins at the art; Goya's workman would like to take a crack at the English charmers, the house is a bad museum; the vulgar public can't sit down, and everything is in place according to Frick in the degree that it is irrelevant to every living thing. A death house for a dying world.

There is a modern corollary to Marx's theorem: The exchange value of a museum having been expressed in a measureless quantity of workers' lives, so coal and steel kings disguise the value of innumerable coal and steel workers by their museums. Will we accept this formula? No, fellow artists, we will not!



At the Opera  
Tschacbasov  
of 'The Ten'

From the Union Show  
—Courtesy of A.C.A. Gallery

## EXHIBITIONS

**A.C.A.**—52 W. 8 St. Paintings by William Gropper, social satirist. Feb. 3-15. **American Place**—Stieglitz—509 Madison Ave. Recent oils by Georgia O'Keeffe painted in New Mexico. Jan. 7-Feb. 27. **Another Place**—43 W. 8 St. Frank H. Schwarz. Drawings and paintings. Jan. 4-30. **Bignou**—32 E. 57 St. Cezanne, Van Gogh, Renoir. Jan. 13-Feb. 8. **Brummer**—53 E. 57 St. The large Lipchitz show through January. Paintings by Czobel, February. **Contemporary Arts**—41 W. 54 St. Milton Douthat. Jan. 20-Feb. 8.

**Downtown Gallery**—113 W. 13 St. American birds in sculpture. 1780-1935. Jan. 27-Feb. 17. **Guild Art Gallery**—37 W. 57 St. Oils by Jacques Zucker. Jan. 27-Feb. 17. **Marie Harriman**—63 E. 57 St. Paintings by Arthur Carles. Drawings by Halicka. February. **Knodler**—11 E. 57 St. Water colors by Winslow Homer. Jan. 20-Feb. 8. **Julien Levy**—602 Madison Ave. Campigli, a sensitive neo-classicist. Jan. 21-Feb. 18. **Pierre Matisse**—51 E. 57 St. Important examples of Chirico, Leger, Picasso, Matisse, Miro. Jan. 14-Feb. 8. **Mobiles** by Calder. Feb. 8-Mar. 6. **Midtown Galleries**—605 Madison Ave. Paintings by Azzi Aldrich. Jan. 27-Feb. 10. Isabel Bishop. Feb. 11-29.

**Museum of Modern Art**—11 W. 53 St. Posters by Cassandre. Genuine art in advertising. Also architecture by H. H. Richardson and modern drawings. Jan. 15-Feb. 16. **New Art Circle**—Neumann—509 Madison Ave. Kadinsky through February. **Marie Sterner**—9 E. 57 St. Mary Piexotto and Lydis. Jan. 28-Feb. 8. Paintings by Zolton Sepashy. Feb. 10-22. **Dorothy Paris**—56 W. 53 St. Oils and gouaches by A. F. Levinson. Jan. 26-Feb. 15. **A. Seligmann**—11 W. 52 St. Titian, Tintoretto, Veronese. Through January. **J. Seligmann**—8 E. 51 St. Large African sculpture exhibit through January 22. **Mrs. C. J. Sullivan**—57 E. 56 St. Modigliani through January 25. Irish paintings by Paolo MacWhite. Feb. 3-24. **Valentine**—69 E. 57 St. The most important Matisse shown in America and others. Through January. First large show of Soutine here. Through February. **Walker Galleries**—108 E. 57 St. Wheatfield paintings by Joe Jones. Jan. 20-Feb. 1.

## ANNOUNCEMENT

The John Reed Club School of Art will be dissolved at the end of January, according to an announcement.

Plans are being considered by a group of nationally known artists who are organizing an independent school, to take over the equipment and quarters of the school, beginning on February first.



# "THE TEN"

by Herbert Lawrence

FOR a long time now, those who frequent New York's art galleries have been familiar with the work of the artists who call themselves "The Ten." The Midtown, the Uptown and the Secession galleries have at various times hung the work of these "younger" artists, who now, perhaps as a sign of a new kind of maturity, are banded together and are exhibiting as a group at the Montross galleries. (As this review goes to press, the exhibition is no longer current but the group, still retaining its identity, is showing at the Municipal Art Gallery, where comparison with an "Academician" show in the same gallery may prove very interesting.) As a matter of fact, only nine men take part in the initial performance. Ben-Zion, Ilya Bolotowsky, Adolph Gottlieb, Louis Harris, Kufeld, Marcus Rothkowitz, Louis Schanker, Joseph Solman, and Tschachbasov, each show four paintings.

The problem of revealing within the limits of four paintings the range of an artist's ability has here been generally solved by an interesting technique. Two of the paintings of each artist are similar in treatment and subject matter, a third and fourth give enough variety to outline the stature of the man. Thus Schanker's "Leap Frog" and "Men on a Bench" are sufficiently alike to show that neither is accidental, while "Head of a Nun," and "Three Clowns" show that the artist has variety within his particular style. Such a method in choosing paintings for group exhibitions is to be commended. When we come to the artists and their paintings, our first impression is of strong individuality and marked differences between the various men. Perhaps it is the insistence upon individuality which forms the basis of "The Ten" as a group, but further analysis shows a much more profound basis. There is in this exhibition, taken as a whole, a unity of tradition and an effort to synthesize this tradition with contemporary, realistic, social needs.

As we look at the paintings we cannot help but recall the aesthetic, art for art's sake point of view, which is a fundamental of the modern movement in late

nineteenth and early twentieth century art and resulted in Picasso, Roualt, Klee, Kandinsky, Miro, etc., whose ghosts are called up in the present company. In the work of "The Ten," however, there is an attempt to combine a social consciousness with this abstract, expressionistic heritage, thus saving art from being mere propaganda on the one hand, or mere formalism on the other. But the result here is only a statement of the problem, and stated, no doubt, with such enthusiasm, directness and lack of restraint that vitality is often perverted into confusion.

THE subject matter which interests these artists may be, with individual exceptions, divided into three main groups—an interest in purely aesthetic activity, as represented in Bolotowsky's "Art Class," Solman's "Quartette," or Schanker's "Three Clowns"; an interest in the proletariat and its problems, as represented in Ben-Zion's "Lynching," Rothkowitz's "Woman Sewing" or Tschachbasov's "Handout"; and a third interest in the general expression of futility, abandonment and the insecurity of modern life, as represented in Kufeld's "Environment of Despair," Gottlieb's "Conference" or Harris' "Abandoned Factory." In the first group we feel a strong accent on post-impressionist early twentieth century painting. In the second group we are made aware of the contemporary interest. And in the third group we should be able to realize, most clearly, an artistic synthesis, since here implications of social criticism may be more subtle, and complement the emotional appeal with intellectual stimuli. But when we consider the individual artist we often find a lack of coordination between his craftsmanship and his artistic vision or an artistic vision not remarkable for its depth and human or artistic insight.

Both Kufeld and Gottlieb are especially interested in the futility theme. Gottlieb is lyrical where Kufeld is more dramatic. But what does Gottlieb tell us in his coloristically calm and dreamlike "Conference" and "Rendezvous"?

What motivates the figures, besides an aesthetic, formal impulse in the artist to meet in the unreal, other world landscape of the painting? Not to plan, not to agitate, not to act but just to be together and face infinity, without hope, without desire. This romantic escape idea, is poetically expressed, but there is no comfort here. In Kufeld, on the other hand, where even the titles reflect the intensity with which the artist reacts to the insecurity of modern society, the formal conception and execution of his problem, as embodied in "Mystery of Rebirth" or "Environment of Despair," communicate a theatrical emotion not consistent with the profundity of the subject matter. Louis Harris, who suggests a relationship to Kufeld and Gottlieb by his interest in the abandoned industrial plant, reveals in his work a limited artistic personality who produces able, sincere art within his limitations. There is good workmanship and artistic effort behind these small canvases, but the imaginative source from which they spring is yet a little arid.

The work of Ilya Bolotowsky holds confused reminiscences in feeling, and often in technique, of Picasso, Chagall, Miro and Klee. But no new, vital synthesis has been made. While Schanker, recalling earlier men, shows a deeper appreciation of their artistic problems and their solutions. His "Three Clowns" is typical of the success he has in identifying his form and color with his subject matter.

Ben-Zion's "Lynching" is evidence of a dramatic artistic personality searching for new ways to express ideas which, though vital, have become hackneyed through repetitive, unimaginative presentation. His "Friday Evening" is frankly Jewish in mood as well as subject matter, but this racial feeling is undoubtedly one of the effects Ben-Zion strives after.

Tschachbasov anachronistically raises the controversial question of the relation between African primitive art forms and the modern art movement. His dependence upon such forms is confined to social satire *via* caricature.

Solman and Rothkowitz have a common appreciation for a low-keyed palette and a seriousness which they ask their audience to share with them, but not very convincingly.

As a sign of direction and a demonstration of purpose this exhibition is interesting and entertaining. But the lack of profundity in the solutions of the stated problems makes it valid only as a description of the moment—and only for the moment.



# THE PICTURES AND PUPPETS OF YOSL CUTLER

by Louis Bunin



**T**HE recent exhibition of puppets, paintings and drawings by Yosl Cutler at the John Reed School of Art was something of a surprise to many who knew the enigmatic and popular Yiddish puppet master, but were not aware of his extraordinary versatility and talent as a cartoonist, painter and humorist writer. Cutler was staff artist and writer on the Jewish *Morning Freiheit* and contributed to many Jewish periodicals of poetry and prose.

Cutler was born in the Ukraine; he arrived in America in 1920; was an itinerant sign painter; studied painting and drawing at night. His first experience with puppets was in Morris Schwartz's Yiddish theater on Second Avenue. Cutler was asked to make puppets for a small part in a play. The medium so enchanted him that it remained his greatest interest and became precisely the medium in which he could best express his many talents.

## *The Modicots*

With Zuni Maud he formed a marionette group called the Modicots. Among

professional puppeteers in America the productions of the Modicots set a standard not reached by any other group to this day. Although their performances were in the Yiddish language, their fame spread and reached non-Jewish speaking audiences who understood the plays because of the brilliant marionette conception and skill with which the Modicots presented their puppet plays.

More than any other group, the Modicots proved that, with pantomime and clever personality, projection in voice and mimicry, puppets spoke a universal language.

All those who have seen Yosl Cutler's puppets know of the mischievous, imaginative and slashing satirical comments he made on "types." Yosl Cutler learned to make moving eyes, mouths and parts on the puppets to give them additional life in a caricaturish way.

## *Art of a Puppeteer*

A puppeteer, to be a great puppet master, must have a caricaturist instinct, that will enable him to give precisely those movements to the puppet that the puppet

"type" demands. Actually, the puppets' range of movement is limited. Yosl Cutler knew how to hold in reserve the most exciting and delightfully surprising movements for emphasis at the right time. In his hands the puppets seemed to have unlimited possibilities and movements. But, further, the caricature of the puppet and the caricature of the voice of the puppeteer must be matched with a caricature language and use of voice. We puppeteers hold Yosl Cutler's skits and playlets as a model of puppet language and ideas for the stage.

The fantastic puppet eye-view in Cutler's play so well known in New York, "*Simche*" and his "*Yiddena*," was presented last season at the Civic Repertory Theater on a New Theater night. The next day the *Daily* theater reviewer said that never in his experience had he seen a proscenium in a theater so completely removed. That means that the audience and the puppets seemed to be in one large room and the entire audience participated in the play.

Yosl Cutler, the great puppet master, knew how to do that. His audiences



shouted warnings to his puppets. They hissed and booed the villains; they taunted the cops and shouted advice to the simple, ungainly, humorous, bearded puppet "Simche."

### "The Crisis Dybbuk"

One more illustration of a typical puppet idea from Yosl Cutler's last play written shortly before he was killed in the tragic automobile accident. This play is called "The Crisis Dybbuk" based on the old Hebrew legend in which a spirit of a dead suitor lodges in the body of a living bride. In the original version, the rabbis in the synagogue drive the spirit out of the bride's body by means of orthodox hocus-pocus. In Yosl Cutler's satiric version of the play, the bride is Prosperity who looks disturbingly like Mae West. The spirit of *Dybbuk* is the Crisis who dives under her skirts. Then Rabbi Roosevelt and Rabbi Ku Klux Klan and Abe Kahn try to dislodge the Crisis *Dybbuk* from the amply proportioned Prosperity. Rab. Roosevelt tries it with a Blue Eagle while chanting the well-known alphabet combinations, R.F.C., C.C.C., P.W.A., etc. For this play twenty-eight puppets were completed. It was to have been presented this fall and would certainly have set a new standard for a side-splitting pointed madness in political satire.

### A Serious Humorist

Can you imagine a great artist like Daumier or Cruikshank making drawings purely for art's sake? Preposterous, isn't it? The vigor, life and purpose in their work were rooted in the fact that they took sides in a social struggle. Yosl Cutler got his ammunition and inspiration from the revolutionary movement—and gave it one of the most original of its satirical artists.

As for Yosl Cutler, the humorist-writer, having worked daily for the largest part of the past year with Yosl Cutler, I know that there are among his great many friends certain misunderstandings of his character. By many he was considered an East Side mischievous gamin who never gave up. He carried fun and levity with him into public and private gatherings. I have seen Yosl Cutler work on these fantastic little features, poems and drawings that are so well-known to the Jewish people in America. I have seen him weed and prune his articles with that craftsmanlike labor that only serious workers have, have heard him discuss the ideas and philosophic content of his articles and I have seen him weigh and dissect them before he used

them in his cartoons and drawings and puppet plays. Despite the countless shop papers he illustrated, the numberless posters he painted, he still found time to make some drawings over as many as a dozen times before he achieved just the thing he wanted.

### Cutler's Paintings

An interesting insight into the serious attitude toward his painting and drawing was seen in the few paintings on the walls of John Reed Club. There, despite the fact that he calls a bucket of

water Prosperity, there are many who were amazed at the painstaking care in the execution of this study.

Among the Jewish critics and writers who did know him best you will hear that Yosl Cutler was killed precisely at the time when he seemed to have reached a full maturity in his work and on the basis of studies, and experimenting, and learning, he was launched as a distinguished and important artist. It is impossible to say now whether there is enough of his work left to give him immortality in the art world, though no one will doubt it in the field of puppetry.

## NATIONAL ORGANIZATION

(Continued from inside front cover)

queiros' importance must be sacrificed.

But civic duty has not stopped here. The recently completed murals in the Frank Wiggin's school by such an established artist in America as Leo Katz have been removed. No matter that the work was sponsored by the P.W.A.P., Mr. Katz was so unwise as to depict not only the benefits of science and industry to mankind, but also the perversion of them as found in imperialistic war. This is not exactly a Communist theme. Books have been written about the horrors of war; plays have been produced and movies released. The difficulty with the Katz mural lies in the fact that it was to be placed in a trade school. It was not deemed wise to have constantly before the youth of Los Angeles such unpleasant notions of the glories of fighting for one's country.

And last, but not least, in this concerted attack against the freedom of expression of the artist was the destruction of Maxine Albrow's frescos in the Ebel Club of Los Angeles. Here we had the most perfect example of mere "art." No propaganda of any sort—Greek maidens in flowing robes. But, alas, they offended certain politically powerful ladies of the club who did not rest until the work was destroyed by *lye*. So vicious was their hatred of the murals that they feared, had the murals merely been covered with a layer of paint, some future executive board would have them restored.

During these several wanton acts of destruction no voice of protest was heard from any save perhaps the artist concerned, and a few mild words of astonishment in the press. Not once, but many times, was there opportunity for

the artists to unite in some action against these proceedings. Surely, local artists are not so callous as to care only for their own cherished creative efforts? In such as the above cases there is an ideal involved which goes to the very root of the contemporary artist's creed: freedom of expression. It may be too early to expect the average artist to protest the persecution of a striking miner, but, in view of what has already taken place, it cannot be too early for him to comprehend the vital need to stand united in his own interests.

**N**OW that the W.P.A. is taking Los Angeles artists off the relief rolls, there is more pressing need for immediate united action on the part of the artists. For one thing, the art project calls for the employment of only 200 local artists in a community which numbers several thousand artists. Lacking statistics, surely it is safe to assume that from 500 to 1,000 of these have no economic security. Furthermore, of this 200, all but 10 per cent must have been on S.E.R.A. prior to November 1. Many artists who have managed thus far to stay off relief rolls, or have been unable to get on, are in drastic need of financial aid, in order to continue their creative work. We are facing another depression winter, in many respects more severe than previous ones. The Los Angeles Art Project must be increased to take care of these artists.

As for the 10 per cent, or 20 artists, to be employed outside relief cases, the selection of these is so controlled by a bureaucratic advisory committee, the most prominent member of which is



known to be a fascist, that chances of employment in this direction are only possible for the artist who is a political or personal favorite. At the time of writing only about 50 artists have been employed, enough to show us something of the machine that is at work to keep itself in power.

Should there be much doubt as to what to expect, we only have to recall what took place on the P.W.A.P. two years ago under some of these same men. Favoritism, discrimination, and unexplained dismissals were ill-concealed behind a mask of patriotism and art for art's sake. Individual protests were unheeded. Surely in the light of what has happened artists must begin to see that only united in a body can they hope to curb this ruthless suppression of their interests and needs.

Let us hope that the splendid achievements already made in the East, as indicated by the Artists' Union, ART FRONT and the Artists' Congress called for February 14, 1936, will give courage and strength to the western artist turned sceptic in his isolation.

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